



Eldercare Locator

FEATURE ARTICLE

Connecting Older Americans to the Services They Need

Dorothy Scott will be 79 this year, and she is as spirited, gregarious, and outspoken as she has always been! "Dot" is nothing if not an independent thinker. And thinking is not the only way that she is independent.

James, her childhood sweetheart and husband for 59 years, died 3 years ago and Dot has been living by herself ever since. "When dad died, we naturally thought mom would move in with one of us," recalls Emma, the oldest of Dorothy's four children. "Not surprisingly, we learned mom had her own ideas."

"I have close friends that I try to get together with at least once a week and I'm pretty active in my church," explains Dorothy. "I appreciated my children's concerns, but they all lived at least 700 miles away. I wasn't ready to move away from my home and friends."

The desire of older adults to continue living in their current homes is not uncommon, but sometimes it poses challenges for caregivers and seniors themselves. Fortunately, a friend told Emma about the Eldercare Locator, a nationwide directory assistance service for aging Americans and caregivers administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration on Aging (AoA).

Emma called the Eldercare Locator's toll-free number and was greeted by a kind, caring information specialist. The specialist listened, asked questions, and transferred Emma directly to the local agency servicing her mother's community. With the agency's assistance, Emma was able to arrange transportation to doctors' appointments, help with household chores, and even an occasional social visit to ensure that everything was okay in Dot's home. Thanks to the Eldercare Locator, everybody is happy. Dorothy and Emma can both rest better.

Easier Than Ever Before

Making things "a little easier" for older adults and their caregivers is at the heart of the Eldercare Locator public service. Established in 1991, the Eldercare Locator is designed to help older adults and their caregivers navigate their way through the maze of senior services and identify trustworthy local support resources. The goal is to provide users with the information they need to help aging Americans live independently and safely in their homes and communities for as long as possible. Whether it's home health care, meal delivery, or a well-deserved break from caregiving responsibilities, the Eldercare Locator links those who need assistance with state and local area agencies on aging and community-based organizations that serve older adults and their caregivers.

Gateway to a Wealth of Information

The Eldercare Locator receives more than 10,000 calls a month from older adults and caregivers looking for assistance. Home health and financial issues are two of the most requested topics, with inquiries ranging from help paying for prescription drugs and managing finances to hiring a home health aide. Callers do not need to reside in the same area as the older person who needs assistance. In fact, the Eldercare Locator is specifically designed to assist caregivers who may live miles away.

"As the older population continues to grow in America, more families and caregivers are facing the challenge of caring for their aging relatives," says Josefina G. Carbonell, AoA's Assistant Secretary for Aging. "The Eldercare Locator provides a clear path to available assistance in the area where you or your family members live, and prevents unnecessary stress."

Andrew, an ardent devotee of the Eldercare Locator whose father lives across the country, agrees. "My father was having a problem with balance and I was worried about him having an accident," he explains. "In just one call, I was able to find a home modification program that installed assistive devices throughout his home. Now, the Eldercare Locator is the first place I go to take care of all my father's needs."

Knowing what senior services exist and how to use them is the first step in helping older Americans live out their golden years with independence and respect. Let the Eldercare Locator connect you to the timely and accurate information you need. The Eldercare Locator service can be accessed toll-free Monday through Friday, between 9:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. EST, by calling 1-800-677-1116. An on-line version is also available at www.eldercare.gov.

As the Nation celebrates Older Americans Month in May, you can learn more about local support resources and other programs by visiting www.aoa.gov. The theme of Older Americans Month—"Celebrate Long-Term Living!"—highlights the goal of organizations throughout the Aging Network to help older Americans stay healthy and active longer.

